

# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GERMAN ROTTWEILER AND THE AMERICAN ROTTWEILER?

By Steve Wolfson

While walking my Rottweiler, Bronco, a gentleman approached the two of us and said, “Oh, he’s very nice, he must be a German Rottweiler!” “How do you know that?” “I can tell by the size of his head. His head is much bigger than my Rottie’s head. German Rottweilers have much bigger heads than the American ones.” “Bronco was born and raised right here on Long Island, NY. He descends from German stock, but they all do”. Looking still puzzled by my explanation, “Then why all the Rottweilers I see have such small heads and potato stick legs?”- that characterization made me laugh - “Most likely, the ones you are seeing result from a poorly planned breeding program using inferior breeding stock.” He told me he had paid a great deal of money for his dog and was disappointed in the way it developed. I understood his disillusionment and further explained



that spending a large sum of money - I was afraid to ask the price he paid- was not the correct criterion to procure a quality Rottweiler.

“The German Rottweilers are better”, “The American Rottweilers have no bone substance”, “Are the American Rottweilers from the same breeding stock”? I am continually asked these questions and hear these statements so I thought it would be a good idea to answer them. What is the difference between the German Rottweiler and the American Rottweiler?

There is only one Rottweiler, correct in *type*\* and construction according to the standard. No doubt untypical and poorly constructed specimens are everywhere. I often encounter Rottweilers purchased as pets - even as show dogs - that I would consider completely void in *breed type*\*, yet I know they are purebred. What is the difference? Variations of size, shape, head type, etc, encountered in the breed happen for two reasons:

- A. Normal variance that occurs in the progeny when breeding Sire to Dam
- B. Poor planning or little concern for the Rottweiler breed (some breedings occur with no motive at all, but a monetary one).

A. Even within carefully planned litters, the progeny vary in type and construction. This is normal. Not every pup in the litter will be uniform. This divergence is a matter of genetic inheritance that all competent and concerned breeders must deal with each time they plan a litter.

When searching a stud dog to utilize, the experienced breeder does their homework by:

1. Researching the pedigrees of Sire and Dam.
2. Ascertaining whether the stud dog and brood bitch will complement each other.
3. What improvements can be realized in the upcoming litter?
4. What undesirable construction, type faults or temperaments will possibly surface?

By doing homework and research, the concerned breeder reduces the occurrence of undesirable traits and increases the chances of producing desirable traits throughout the litter. Predicting results and having goals are the hallmark of a concerned, experienced and responsible breeder.

B. Most poorly planned couplings often result in undesirable traits in the progeny such as Doberman-like heads, long bodies, unstable temperament, thin, spindle-like bones and general poor construction. These traits are repeatedly observed when the Sire and Dam are not uniform or are of

inferior *breed type*\*. A breeding of this sort should not occur and results in a great variation of traits for the Rottweiler.

Thoughtful, selective, hard working breeders produce top quality specimens. It does not matter what the country of origin is. Germany produces some of the finest Rottweilers. Also included in this list are all of Europe, Russia, Canada and certainly the United States. Quality is where you find it and is not exclusive to one particular country. Conversely, there are plenty of pinheaded, stick-legged, grossly overweight, giant sized Rottweilers available here and outside the US.

However, there are differences when we compare breeding protocols. Here are some highlights of the ADRK (the German breed club) breeding procedures.

1. The ADRK has strict controls on which dogs may be bred.
2. The ADRK requires all dogs to pass the ZTP (Zuchttauglichkeitsprüfung). The ZTP ensures the dog has a minimal obedience title (BH) and is structurally and temperamentally sound. A dog cannot be bred unless it passes.
3. The ADRK standard does not allow any missing teeth.
4. Any dog/bitch over or under the height range cannot pass the ZTP.
5. Rottweilers born after 1999 cannot have docked tails. The practice of tail docking has been outlawed.

Does this translate into breeding better dogs? One must make a comparative analysis and decide. The real question to ask is does a concerted and organized breeding protocol produce results closer to the standard?



At the American Rottweiler Club national held in Orlando, Florida, March 2002, I observed outstanding specimens. I could not determine their country of origin merely by looking at them and would be happy to compete with these excellent US Rottweilers in the Klub Sieger show in Germany.

Beware of sales pitches, unethical breeders and undocumented claims. Read, learn, ask detailed questions, go to the shows and become a true student of the breed. Do not be fooled by the **Grass is Greener** logic. A better dog is the by-product of a thoughtful and careful breeding program, not by virtue of its country of origin. That is a premise based in mythology and snob appeal.

**\*Breed type:**

Breed type for the Rottweiler is the essence of characteristics\* that distinguishes it from others.

**\*Essence of characteristics:**

One must carefully read the standard to discover and comprehend the essence of characteristics.